Forward Logistical Element

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Supporting the light infantry dur-ing certain combat and peacekeeping operations can become logistical nightmares for the combat service support (CSS) units that attempt to monitor and manage operations solely from the rear. A light infantry battalion can significantly reduce these logistical problems by having a forward logistical element (FLE). A FLE is a task force of selected CSS assets from the forward support battalion (FSB).

Understandably, logistical support is difficult for an infantry battalion when its brigade is dispersed over a large area--as when the brigade deploys its battalions in echelon, or when a battalion operates separately from its brigade, as is often the case at the National Training Center. Attaching a FLE is essential in providing direct support to the light infantry.

The use of an FLE eliminates most of the problems the infantry battalion faces when it deploys the trains in echelon. The battalion deploys both the combat trains and the field trains forward from the brigade support area (BSA) when it uses the FLE, instead of employing echeloned trains. At the same time, the FLE deploys with the trains and provides logistical assets directly to the supported battalion. When the brigade commander employs the FLE, he projects critical support forward to the battalion commander, enabling the battalion to sustain its CSS operations much better and the brigade to disperse over more of the battlefield.

Current light infantry doctrine for CSS calls for the BSA to provide logistical support to the forward units. In environments where the battlefield covers a larger area, the light infantry faces numerous logistical problems as a result of conducting CSS operations out of the BSA. The current doctrine also calls for the battalion trains to deploy in echelon, which splits the trains. Problems develop because this split also separates key personnel.

Establishing the battalion trains in echelon fails to achieve three principles: unity of effort, unity of command, and security.

Unity of effort is not maintained when the battalion operates two logistical sites. The S-1 and S-4 shops must run two command posts. This separates these two staff officers from their noncommissioned officers (NCOs) in charge and from half of their personnel and equipment as well. The personnel of the battalion maintenance section, communications platoon, and support platoon are also split between the two trains. In the end, these sections must do twice the work with fewer soldiers. The CSS assets of the infantry battalion are thus prevented from operating to their maximum effectiveness.

When the brigade commander directs the use of the FLE, he projects critical support forward to the battalion commander.

Unity of command is lost in two ways: First, the headquarters and headquarters company (HHC) commander and the S-4 end up doing similar tasks at two different locations. Each is in charge of his own element. Both of them command and control CSS operations and assets. Their actions, which are intended to be synchronized, are often contradictory or repetitive. These two officers spend time tracking the battle, coordinating and planning CSS operations, securing their perimeters, and quartering and jumping their own elements.

Second, unity of command is threatened by having the HHC commander operate the field trains from the BSA. Although the CSS assets are from the infantry battalion, the field trains become part of the BSA and fall under the responsibility of the FSB commander. Thus, the HHC commander works for two different battalion commanders. He receives guidance and orders from the infantry commander to support the battalion, and he receives directions from the FSB commander on how he is to establish the field trains in the BSA. The HHC commander must secure part of the BSA perimeter, follow the FSB SOPs, and displace on order. These requirements are difficult to achieve even under ideal conditions. The HHC commander, in the end, has no unity of command when he's trying to satisfy two battalion commanders.

Security is often lacking on the combat trains perimeter and along the battalion supply route. While the combat trains are usually established three to five kilometers from the FLOT (forward line of own troops), the S-4 has only 15 to 25 soldiers conducting sustainment operations and securing their perimeter. The soldiers in the combat trains focus primarily on conducting continuous CSS operations, not on security. Often limited security is provided by a CSS operator during his "down" time. The result is that a weak perimeter is established; the combat

trains must depend on two or three observation posts and hope their passive security measures work. In reality, the trains become a vulnerable target for the enemy.

The battalion supply route is very difficult to secure. It tends to stretch 20 to 30 kilometers from the BSA to the lead companies. The traffic on it constantly presents the enemy with many lightly-defended targets from which to choose. More often than not, combat units are not tasked to secure the supply route. Although aviation, military police squads, and TOW sections are capable of providing sec-urity, other missions and requirements prevent them from covering such a long route. Usually, security is left to the drivers and track commanders of the support platoon. The logistical packages (LOGPACs) face the constant threat of ambush and the loss of critical supplies and valuable CSS assets.

The FLE is a tailored company-sized task force of CSS assets from the FSB that aids the battalion's CSS operations.

Longer supply routes often cause delays and lost LOGPACs. The turn-around time between LOGPACs is such that only one can be successfully run per day for sustained periods of time.

The brigade commander and the FSB commander can eliminate these prob- lems by deploying the FLE along with the infantry battalions. Having the FLE places a logistical unit forward in a secure area with the combined trains.

The FLE is a tailored company-sized task force of CSS assets from the FSB that complements the battalion's CSS operations and enables the battalion to operate more independently. It is attached directly to the battalion it supports. Its mission is to provide direct support to augment the infantry battalion's organic CSS elements. The FLE collocates with the combined trains of the infantry battalion. The trains and FLE deploy five to eight kilometers behind the FLOT and provide all CSS to the battalion with reduced support provided from the FSB.

Two officers (first lieutenants or captains) are assigned from the FSB to provide command and control for the FLE. The senior of these is the FLE commander; he works with the infantry battalion HHC commander, who is in charge of the trains/FLE site. The second officer is the support operations officer in charge of the FLE, who works directly with the battalion S-4 and the support platoon leader in planning and coordinating logistical operations. He is also responsible for coordinating with the FSB support operations section for support. He keeps the FSB informed of the CSS operation and the battalion's status of the classes of supply. The FLE support operations OIC and the battalion S-4 forecast and plan all CSS operations and resupply for the infantry battalion and the trains/FLE. The infantry battalion S-4 continues to track CSS and remains responsible for overall CSS operations.

The FLE is composed of detached elements from the various support units in the FSB. While the breakdown varies according to METT-T, a basic package is as follows:

From HQ and Company A (FSB Supply Company):

- Class I distribution site and personnel (two days of supply [DOS]).
- Class III Bulk (tank and pump unit).
- Classes II, IV, VII (limited on-hand supply).

From Company B (FSB Maintenance Company):

- Maintenance support team with limited prescribed load list.
- Class IX exchange point (limited on-hand).
- Evacuation point for communications, weapons, generators, and automotive equipment.

From Company C (FSB Medi- cal Company):

- One or two ambulances (dedicated as ambulance exchange point for evacuation).
- Class VIII resupply.

From Transportation Company (FSB or MSB truck company):

- Truck master.
- Three to four 5-ton trucks.
- One 3-ton forklift.

The means of receiving support is altered when the FLE is used. The

CLASSES OF SUPPLY

CLASS	
I	Subsistence, gratuitous-issue health and welfare items.
II	Clothing, individual equipment, tentage, organizational tool sets and kits, hand tools, administrative and housekeeping supplies and equipment.
III	Petroleum fuels, lubricants, hydraulic and insulating oils, preservatives, liquids and gas compounds, components and additives of petroleum and chemical products, and coal.
IV	Construction materials including installed equipment, and all fortification and barrier materials.
V	Ammunition of all types (including chemical, radiological, and special weapons), bombs, explosives, mines, fuses, detonators, pyrotechnics, missiles, rockets, propellants, and other associated items.
VI	Personal demand items such as candy, cigarettes, soap, and cameras (nonmilitary sales items).
VII	Major end items such as launchers, tanks, mobile machine shops, and vehicles.
VIII	Medical material, including repair parts peculiar to medical equipment.
IX	Repair parts and components to include kits, assemblies, and subassemblies (repairable or nonrepairable) which are required for maintenance support of all equipment.
X	Material to support nonmilitary programs such as agriculture and economic development (not included in Classes I through IX).
Misc.	Water, maps, salvage, and captured material.

trains/FLE maintain one to three DOS on hand. The most supplies the FLE has is two DOS while the trains always maintains one. This allows the battalion to operate independently while still being able to move quickly. The trains/FLE is resupplied by running LOGPACs to the BSA. The FLE support operations officer, through prior coordination, requests the neces-sary classes of supplies. LOGPACs from the BSA to the trains/FLE would be needed once every two or three days. This reduces the traffic on the supply route and limits unnecessary traffic in the BSA. The battalion backhauls personnel and trash, and evacuates unserviceable equipment during the LOGPACs. It remains the battalion support platoon's responsibility to draw Class V from the ammunition transfer point. The support operations officer coordinates quantities and times.

The quality of CSS in the infantry battalion improves with the use of the FLE. The battalion finds there is a unity of effort with their FLE counterparts. Logistical support is provided directly to the battalion and becomes a consistent support relationship, much like the other slice elements in the battalion.

The problems encountered when conducting a split trains operation are reduced if not eliminated. Unity of command is returned when the HHC commander and the battalion S-4 operate together. The S-4 concentrates on logistically supporting the battalion and tracking the battle. The HHC commander can then focus directly on establishing the trains. He becomes responsible for implementing a security plan, maintaining the perimeter, and quartering and jumping the trains/FLE. He no longer has to manage with two commands. He is freed from the constraints of the BSA while retaining the logistical support provided by the FSB.

The CSS assets of the infantry battalion are no longer divided between two sites doing the same tasks. The battalion can mass its CSS operators. In return, more personnel are available to conduct CSS operations and maitain the perimeter. The quality of logistical support provided to the infantry battalion commander is greatly improved. CSS can be pushed to the companies instead of being pulled from the BSA and is much more responsive with shorter supply lines. LOGPACs can be conducted more frequently, and the demand for supplies can be forecast better.

The HHC commander is freed from the constraints of the BSA while retaining the logistical support provided by the FSB.

Security is improved significantly with the combination of the trains and the FLE. They are slightly farther back than the combat trains would be, which puts more space be-tween the logistic assets and the enemy. With more personnel freed from duplicating work and various organic assets now combined,the HHC commander can run a stronger perimeter. The trains/FLE, in the end, has a better manned perimeter and more firepower. The supply route is less hazardous for the LOGPACs moving forward and rearward because it is traveled less often. The shorter route forward is faster to travel and presents a smaller area for possible enemy ambush attempts. The route from the BSA to the trains/FLE is used only once every two or three days, pre-senting fewer targets to the enemy with less frequency. Meanwhile, the need for a TOW section or a military police squad to reconnoiter the route before LOGPACs or to provide security would be reduced. Security missions can be executed without excessively diverting assets from the primary mission.

The FLE does not cure all of an infantry battalion's logistical problems, but it does allow the battalion to manage and operate its assets more efficiently. Additionally, the FLE does not place excessive strain on the FSB. The FSB commander benefits by having a smaller BSA to manage. Because the field trains are no longer part of his perimeter, he can have fewer supplies on hand, which significantly increases his mobility.

The FLE can best be used on battlefields where a light infantry brigade is dispersed over great distances or where a battalion task force is operating independently of the brigade or is attached to a heavy brigade, as at the NTC. The infantry battalion can significantly improve CSS operations by running combined trains, and the forward logistical element makes this possible. The end result is an organization that can better sustain the fighting force.

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